

COUNCIL: 26 JANUARY 2023

DEPUTY LEADER & EDUCATION STATEMENT

Strike Action

The Council has been notified that strike action is to be taken by various Trade Unions on 1st & 14th February and 14th & 15th March 2023 in relation to the 2022 Pay Award. Prior to each strike day, there will be an expectation that schools establish the number of staff that are potentially planning to take strike action, undertake a risk assessment of the implications of the strike action and then decide if the school will be open to pupils and staff; closed to pupils, but open to staff; or closed to all. Headteachers will need to ensure that all parents are informed **no later than** Wednesday 25th January ahead of the first strike day on 1st February. The Council will be issuing guidance for schools and a briefing note will also be issued to members closer to each of the strike dates.

Child Friendly Cardiff

The Child Friendly Cardiff Team partnered again with Children's Services during the festive season and provided over 900 free tickets for families to experience a range of Christmas activities in the city. The tickets were shared with young carers, care experienced children and young people, and families receiving support through our Early Help Teams. The children and young people enjoyed a range of seasonal activities, including ice skating at Winter Wonderland and watching performances of the Cinderella pantomime at the New Theatre. This approach will be sustained as part of the ongoing commitments outlined in the Child Friendly Cardiff Sustainability Plan, which is currently being considered by UNICEF UK as part of the recognition process.

Curriculum for Wales

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Following the judicial review of the new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum in Wales, the judgement was passed down by the High Court on 22nd December 2022. The High Court decision was found to be in favour of the Welsh Government on all grounds. As part of the new Curriculum for Wales, this means that all schools should continue to roll-out RSE as planned in line with the published RSE Code and Guidance. The Council will continue to support schools in the implementation of the Code and will also continue to work closely with Welsh Government officials to ensure appropriate and consistent communication is shared.

Providing New Learning Opportunities in Partnership

Several innovative programmes of work are underway to support schools in Cardiff in introducing authentic learning experiences for pupils as they continue implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales. These include the Space Academy Cardiff, which will be launched in the current spring term and involve a number of schools in the city. It will enable Year 8 pupils to explore the challenges that would be faced during a mission to Mars to develop a new settlement able to sustain human life. The programme has been developed in partnership with Cardiff University.

Cardiff's new Lego Tournament has also been launched involving 20 schools in the city. This will allow pupils to develop skills in teamwork, inclusion, innovation, discovery and impact. This programme is being delivered in partnership with the Institute of Engineering and Technology and Cardiff University.

Expressive Arts is one of six Areas of Learning and Experiences in the new Curriculum for Wales. The Council is working with independent film and TV production company, Severn Screen, who have gifted sets and props that would otherwise have been destroyed. Schools can borrow or make permanent use of these resources to support their drama and film curriculums, providing an amazing opportunity for schools to access resources that would ordinarily be beyond the reach of class teachers in terms of contacts, time and funding.

School Attendance

School attendance levels in Cardiff have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, as is the case across Wales. This month will see the start of a campaign to increase attendance, including the delivery of banners to all schools so that they can be put up outside schools, supported by radio and social media campaigns. There was a delay in the reinstatement of the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for unauthorised absence from school in the autumn term due to technical issues with the online payment system, as well as the software that generates the related paperwork. As a result, the issuing of warnings by the Council, in advance of any FPNs being issued, restarted in early December 2022, with 29 warnings for absence being issued prior to Christmas, which were then subject to a subsequent 3-week monitoring period. If there were any further unauthorised absences by pupils during this 3-week period, then FPNs will have been issued by the Council. Since the start of the current term earlier this month, requests for holidays by pupils during term time can also now be submitted.

School Visits

Before Christmas, I was pleased to visit a number of schools in Cardiff. I joined the Lord Mayor in attending the official opening of the new Key Stage 2 play area at Willowbrook Primary School in November 2022. I visited Oakfield Primary School in early December and witnessed first-hand the preparations for their Christmas concerts. I also attended the performance of the Nativity at Bryn Deri Primary School just before the end of the school term. It was lovely to see the children preparing for Christmas and I want to thank the schools and all the children for such a warm welcome.

Edible Playgrounds

Work continues on the highly successful Edible Playgrounds programme in partnership with Trees for Cities and Grow Cardiff. Following the completion of 10 projects in 2021/22, 4 projects have been completed so far in 2022/23, with a further 7 more projects due to be completed by the end of March 2023. Work is currently underway to compile a list of schemes for 2023/24 that will be supported potentially by One Planet Cardiff funding.

Cardiff Commitment

The Cardiff Commitment Annual Impact Report 2021-2022 has been published and, together with other reports following Open Your Eyes Week in November 2022, can be found on the Cardiff Commitment website via the following link: <https://cardiffcommitment.co.uk/index.php/en/resources/documents/impact-reports-forward-plan>

What's Next Award

The What's Next Award was launched last month, which provides a range of careers and work-related experiences via the Business Forum. On completion, it will provide Year 12 pupils in Cardiff with access to a work experience matched to their subject choices at year end. Cantonian High School is the first school taking part in the pilot, with work experience being supported by the Council's Health & Safety and Cardiff Commitment Teams. Following evaluation at the end of the project, it will then be scaled up across other School Business Forums.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education
20 January 2023